IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Patent Application

Applicant(s): B.M. Jakobsson et al.
Case: 22-2
Serial No.: 09/538,663
Filing Date: March 30, 2000
Group: 3624
Examiner: Stefanos Karmis

Title: Methods of Protecting Against Spam Electronic Mail

SUPPLEMENTAL APPEAL BRIEF

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313

Sir:

Applicants (hereinafter referred to as "Appellants") hereby appeal the rejection of claims 1-6, 8-13 and 15-20 of the above referenced application.

REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The present application is assigned to Lucent Technologies Inc. The assignee Lucent Technologies Inc. is the real party in interest.

RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

There are no known related appeals and interferences.

STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-6, 8-13 and 15-20 are pending in the present application. Claims 1-6, 8-13,15 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e), and claims 17-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) and are appealed.

STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

There have been no amendments filed subsequent to the final rejection.

SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

The present invention relates generally to methods for controlling incoming or received electronic mail (email). More specifically, the invention relates to methods for protecting against the receipt of unwanted or "spam" email in a telecommunication system. See page 2, lines 3-5 of the Specification.

Claim 1 provides a method for preventing receipt by receivers of unwanted email sent by senders in a communication system. It is determined whether email to a receiver comprises valid message authentication code (MAC) information. Email directed to the receiver that does not comprise valid MAC information is filtered out at a gateway of the communication system. The receiver is provided with email directed to the receiver that comprises valid MAC information. Independent claim 10 recites another aspect of the present invention having similar limitations.

By way of example, an illustrative embodiment of the invention of claim 1 is shown in FIG. 2 of the drawings. FIG. 2 is a flow chart of a preferred method of preventing the undesired receipt of spam email. At step 140, it is determined whether the email is valid according to a processed MAC. It is preferable to determine an extension of the receiver's email address such that when this extension appears in the email, the receiver will accept the email. The email is accepted at step 150 if and only if the same extension of the receiver's address is the same as a result calculated for the extension. Otherwise the email is refused at step 160. See page 14, lines 1-12 of the Specification.

Claim 2 provides a method as in claim 1, further comprising the step of registering a sender. A cookie is established by the sender which indicates to the receiver whether the sender has satisfied the requirement to allow the sender to become a registered sender to the receiver. An address related to an address associated with the receiver is established which will inform the sender that the receiver desires that the sender be able to send email to the receiver. A key is established by the receiver which is forwarded to the sender by the receiver to inform the sender that the sender is

authorized to send email to the receiver and is now a registered sender. The key is also for use by the sender whenever the sender wishes to send email to the receiver.

By way of example, an illustrative embodiment of the invention of claim 2 is shown in FIG. 2 of the drawings. The sender sets up a cookie using a stream cipher generated pad at step 110 and sends it to the receiver so that the receiver can decide whether it wishes to receive email from this sender. The receiver then verifies the correctness of the cookie and, at step 120, selects a symmetric key, uniformly at random from a set of possible keys at the receiver's disposal. After the symmetric key is selected by the receiver, the receiver preferably adds redundancy to the key by replying to the sender using a public extension on the receiver's address appended solely for the purpose of setup. The sender then stores the key in a list of all such access keys, thereby allowing future emails from the sender to the receiver to be processed using this key. See page 12, line 1 through page 13, line 10 of the Specification.

The methods of preventing spam email in accordance with the present invention are efficient and computationally non-intensive, thereby conserving the resources of the communication system. Moreover, the inventive methods provide authenticity verification of the email with very little extra computation costs. Additionally, the methods of the present invention achieve message privacy using standard encryption methods and successfully manage data transmission problems associated with sending sensitive information by email. Such features, benefits and advantages have not heretofore been achieved in the art. See page 5, lines 16-22 of the Specification.

GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL

I. Claims 1-6, 8-13, 15 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,694,436 (hereinafter "Audebert").

II. Claims 17-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Audebert in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,424,718 (hereinafter "Holloway").

ARGUMENT

Appellants incorporate by reference herein the disclosures of all previous responses filed in the present application, namely, responses dated June 24, 2004, January 26, 2005, August 17, 2005,

November 21, 2005 and May 15, 2006. Sections I and II to follow will respectively address grounds I and II presented above.

I. Anticipation of claims 1-6, 8-13, 15 and 16

Regarding the §102(e) rejection based on Audebert, Appellants respectfully assert that Audebert fails to teach or suggest all of the limitations in claims 1-6, 8-13, 15 and 16 for at least the reasons presented in Appellants' previous responses as well as the reasons presented below.

It is well-established law that a claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference. *Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California*, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 U.S.P.Q.2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987). Appellants assert that the rejection based on Audebert does not meet this basic legal requirement. Support for this assertion follows.

Audebert discloses techniques for performing secure electronic transactions. A terminal module comprises a filter that processes high-level requests issued by application service providers. Received high-level requests are translated into elementary commands used to invoke security services. Such requests may include information that enables the filter to verify its source and integrity using message authentication codes (MACs).

A. Claims 1, 8-13, 15 and 16

Independent claim 1 recites a method for preventing receipt by receivers of unwanted email sent by senders in a communication system. It is determined whether email to a particular receiver comprises valid MAC information. Email directed to the particular receiver that does not comprise valid MAC information is filtered out at a gateway of the communication system. Email directed to the particular receiver that comprises valid MAC information is provided to the particular receiver. Independent claim 10 recites an additional embodiment of the present invention having similar limitations.

Audebert fails to disclose the use of MACs in email messages. Instead, Audebert describes MAC use in high-level requests or commands from application service providers, which differ significantly from emails sent between users. Thus, Audebert fails to disclose the limitation of

determining whether email comprises valid MAC information. Further, Audebert only discloses filtering of requests and commands from application service providers, and therefore fails to disclose the filtering of email that does not comprise valid MAC information, as well as the providing of email that comprises valid MAC information as recited in independent claims 1 and 10 of the present invention.

Dependent claims 8, 9, 11-13, 15 and 16 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency from independent claims 1 and 10. The patentability of independent claims 1 and 10 is described above. Dependent claims 8, 9, 11-13, 15 and 16 also recite patentable subject matter in their own right. Therefore, for at least the reasons given above, Appellants respectfully request that the §102(e) rejection of claims 1, 8-13, 15 and 16 be withdrawn.

B. Claims 2-6

Dependent claim 2 is patentable at least by virtue of its dependency from independent claim 1. The patentability of claim 1 is described above. However, dependent claim 2 also recites patentable subject matter in its own right.

Audebert fails to disclose the establishment of an address related to an address associated with the receiver which will inform the sender that the receiver desires that the sender be able to send email to the receiver. Audebert also fails to disclose the establishment by the receiver of a key which is forwarded to the sender by the receiver to inform the sender that the sender is authorized to send email to the receiver and is now a registered sender and for use by the sender whenever the sender wishes to send email to the receiver.

Dependent claims 3-6 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency from dependent claim 2. The patentability of dependent claim 2 is described above. Dependent claims 3-6 also recite patentable subject matter in their own right. Therefore, for at least the reasons given above, Appellants respectfully request that the §102(e) rejection of claims 2-6 be withdrawn.

II. Obviousness of claims 17-20

Regarding the §103(a) rejection based on a combination of Audebert and Holloway, Appellants respectfully assert that the cited combination fails to establish a prima facie case of obviousness under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), as specified in M.P.E.P. §2143.

As set forth therein, M.P.E.P. §2143 states that three requirements must be met to establish a prima facie case of obviousness. First, the cited combination must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Third, there must be some suggestion or motivation to combine reference teachings. While it is sufficient to show that a prima facie case of obviousness has not been established by showing that one of the requirements has not been met, Appellants respectfully believe that none of the requirements have been met.

First, with respect to claims 17-20, the collective teaching of Audebert and Holloway fails to suggest or render obvious the elements of such claims. For at least this reason, a prima facie case of obviousness has not been established. Dependent claims 17-20 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency from independent claim 1. Holloway fails to remedy the deficiencies of Audebert described above with regard to the patentability of claim 1. Dependent claims 17-20 also recite patentable subject matter in their own right.

Second, with respect to claims 17-20, Appellants assert that there is no reasonable expectation of success in achieving the present invention through a combination of Audebert and Holloway. For at least this reason, a prima facie case of obviousness has not been established.

Despite the assertion in the final Office Action, Appellants do not believe that Audebert and Holloway are combinable since it is not clear how one would combine them. Audebert filters high-level requests or commands, while Holloway processes messages using public key cryptography with a private key. No guidance was provided in the final Office Action as to how the two references can be combined to achieve the present invention. However, even if combined, for the sake of argument, they would not achieve the techniques of the claimed invention as described above.

Third, with respect to claims 17-20, Appellants assert that no motivation or suggestion exists to combine Audebert and Holloway in a manner proposed by the Examiner, or to modify their teachings to meet the claim limitations. For at least this reason, a prima facie case of obviousness has not been established.

The Federal Circuit has stated that when patentability turns on the question of obviousness, the obviousness determination "must be based on objective evidence of record" and that "this precedent has been reinforced in myriad decisions, and cannot be dispensed with." In re Lee, 277 F.3d 1338, 1343 (Fed. Cir. 2002). Moreover, the Federal Circuit has stated that "conclusory statements" by an examiner fail to adequately address the factual question of motivation, which is material to patentability and cannot be resolved "on subjective belief and unknown authority." Id at 1343-1344.

With regard to claims 17-20, in the Office Action, in section 12 on page 6, the Examiner provides the following statement to prove motivation to combine Audebert and Holloway:

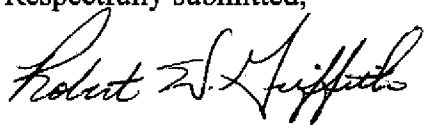
> It would have been obvious . . . to modify the teachings of Audebert and include the teachings of Holloway because it provides a mechanism to enroll participants and provide more efficient security in their transmissions.

The Examiner's conclusory statement does not adequately address the issue of motivation to combine references, and Appellants submit that this statement is based on the type of "subjective belief and unknown authority" that the Federal Circuit has indicated provides insufficient support for an obviousness rejection. Additionally, the Examiner fails to identify any objective evidence of record which supports the proposed combination.

It is well-settled law that "teachings of references can be combined *only* if there is some suggestion or incentive to do so." *ACS Hosp. Sys. v. Montefiore Hosp.*, 732 F.2d 1572, 1577, 221 USPQ 929, 933 (Fed. Cir. 1984) (emphasis in original). Moreover, in order to avoid the improper use of a hindsight-based obviousness analysis, particular findings must be made as to why one skilled in the relevant art, having no knowledge of the claimed invention, would have selected the components disclosed by Audebert and Holloway in the manner claimed (*See, e.g., In re Kotzab*, 217 F.3d 1365, 1371, 55 USPQ2d 1313, 1317 (Fed. Cir. 2000)). No such findings have been provided in the final Office Action. "It is improper, in determining whether a person of ordinary skill would have been led to this combination of references, simply to '[use] that which the inventor taught against its teacher.'" *In re Sang-Su Lee*, 277 F.3d 1338, 1344 (Fed. Cir. 2002) (quoting *W.L. Gore v. Garlock, Inc.*, 721 F.2d 1540, 1553, 220 USPQ 303, 312-13 (Fed. Cir. 1983)).

For at least the reasons given above, Appellants respectfully request withdrawal of the §112, second paragraph, rejection of claim 2, the §102(e) rejection of claims 1-6, 8-13, 15 and 16, and the §103(a) rejection of claims 17-20. As such, the application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



Date: September 29, 2006

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CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. A method for preventing receipt by receivers of unwanted electronic mail messages (email) sent by senders in a communication system, comprising the steps of:

determining whether email to a particular receiver comprises valid message authentication code (MAC) information;

filtering out at a gateway of the communication system email directed to the particular receiver that does not comprise valid MAC information; and

providing the particular receiver with email directed to the particular receiver that comprises valid MAC information.

2. The method of claim 18, wherein the step of registering the particular sender comprises the steps of:

establishing by the particular sender a cookie which indicates to the particular receiver whether the particular sender has satisfied the requirement to allow the particular sender to become a registered sender to the particular receiver;

establishing an address related to an address associated with the particular receiver which will inform the particular sender that the particular receiver desires that the particular sender be able to send email to the particular receiver; and

establishing by the particular receiver a key which is forwarded to the particular sender by the particular receiver to inform the particular sender that the particular sender is authorized to send email to the particular receiver and is now a registered sender and for use by the particular sender whenever the particular sender wishes to send email to the particular receiver.

3. The method recited in claim 2, wherein said step of establishing the address comprises generating a pseudorandom function with a keyed hash function using an input number comprising a unique serial number for use in generating an identifier for email between the particular sender to the particular receiver.

4. The method recited in claim 2, wherein said step of establishing an address comprises sending email from the particular receiver to the particular sender using public key encryption.

5. The method recited in claim 2, wherein said registering step further comprises sending to the particular user by the particular receiver, an encrypted key wherein the encrypted key is a member of a set of encrypted keys.

6. The method recited in claim 5, further comprising the step of storing the encrypted key by the particular sender in a table of encrypted keys for use by the particular sender whenever the particular sender desires to send email to the particular receiver.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining whether email comprises valid MAC information comprises comparing the MAC against a value determined by the particular receiver.

9. The method recited in claim 1, wherein the step of determining whether email comprises valid MAC information comprises comparing the MAC to an available header in an address of the particular receiver, in the received email message, whereby the MAC is not a valid MAC if the MAC and the header are not identical.

10. A server for preventing receipt by receivers of unwanted electronic mail messages (email) sent by senders in a communication system, comprising:

a determining module for determining whether email to a particular receiver comprises valid message authentication code (MAC) information;

a filtering module for filtering out at a gateway of the communication system email directed to the particular receiver that does not comprise valid MAC information; and

a provisioning module for providing the particular receiver with email directed to the particular receiver that comprises valid MAC information.

11. The server recited in claim 20, wherein said registering module further comprises a generator for generating a pseudorandom function with a keyed hash function using an input number comprising a unique serial number for use in generating an identifier for email between the particular sender to the particular receiver.

12. The server recited in claim 11, wherein said registering module sets up an encrypted address for sending email from the particular receiver to the particular sender using public key encryption.

13. The server recited in claim 11, wherein said registering module sends to the particular user by the particular receiver, an encrypted key wherein the encrypted key is a member of a set of encrypted keys.

15. The server of claim 10, wherein said filtering module compares the MAC against a value.

16. The server recited in claim 15, wherein the filtering module compares the MAC to an available header in an address of the particular receiver, in the received email message, whereby the MAC is not a valid MAC if the MAC and the header are not identical.

17. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of determining if a particular sender is a registered sender of email to the particular receiver, wherein the particular sender becomes a registered sender by satisfying a requirement.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising the step of registering the particular sender when the particular sender is determined not to be a registered send of email to the particular receiver.

19. The server of claim 10, further comprising a registering module for determining if a particular sender is a registered sender of email to the particular receiver, wherein the particular sender becomes a registered sender by satisfying a requirement.

20. The server of claim 19, wherein the registering module is also for registering the particular sender when the particular sender is determined not to be a registered send of email to the particular receiver.

EVIDENCE APPENDIX

None.

RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

None.